

**James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, July 16, 1792, from
Thomas Jefferson and James Monroe Correspondence,
Transcribed and Edited by Gerard W. Gawalt,
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James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson

Wmsburg July 17. 1792.

Dear Sir

I believe I mentioned in my last that great part of my time woud. be occupied in the completion of our report to the legislature of the revision of the laws. The only act of the committee at Richmond was to adjourn here wh. left me the alternative of returning home & bringing Mrs. M. down with me or abandoning the trust altogether. Mature consideration determined me in favor of the former plan which has been accordingly executed, notwithstanding the distance & extreme heat of the season.

I was favored at Richmond with yours giving a statment of the votes & eventual decison upon the New York election. The declaration in favor of Clinton on the part of the Canvassers was perhaps right, tho' i rquires more accurate information of their election & sheriff laws to determine it that I possess. How far he might with propriety have declin'd the appointment without an imputation upon the rectitude of the Canvassers, seems doubtful, or what woud. have been the intermediate condition of the govt. who have discharged the Executive functions, whither the legislature must have been convened to relieve them from the dilemma., are circumstances which merited attention & no doubt had weight in the decision. The terms however upon which he has accept his re-election are not flattering to

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him and cast an air upon the whole providing, which how fair soever it may have been, will give the adversary party

an advantage they will not fail to avail themselves of certain it is with respect to this gentn, that altho as a center of union to the republican party in that State it may be necessary to support him, yet there are traits in his character and particularly that of extreme parsimony, which are highly exceptionable. No one woud. point to him as a model for imitation, but comparatively with others in that quarter, & especially his late competitor & conferee share no hesitation which to prefer If an unequivocal fact is shown & principles understood, altho in some respects vicious, yet in. any given situation you can determine his course and as the effect of the alloy may be ascertained it may be guarded against. To some few there are as little doubts of the political principles of the other gentn. as of this, but they are not generally known and therefore his advancement the more objectionable.

Whether things have reached their height in the division of parties, relative to govt. in American and will have a regular course hereafter in favor of the principles of either seems doubtful. That the partizans for monarchy are numerous & powerful in point of talents and influence is in my estimation certain. Even the list of those who have been & perhaps still are active is formidable. That of those who temporize between the conflicting interests and whose weight is of course under the pious cloak of federalist thrown into that scale, is I fear equally so. To be passive in a controversy of this kind, unless the person had been bred a priest in the principles of the Romish church is a satisfactory proof he is on the wrong side. Indeed if imbecility 7 indecision had characterized them thro' life, in their impotence, they might find some excuse. But if they had taken a part on the great fiend which America has promised for 16 or 17 years past how can they justify a supineness & inactivity in the preesent occasion? When principles of government, so far as their effect depends on the great mass of the society who are generally un-

-informed, take their tone from the opinions of those whom they have been long accustomed to look up to as their leaders, is it a sufficient justification for such to say they

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leave them to their own operation. As this class moreover will go with that side which preponderates, policy dictates to count them on the republican list. Something may be gained by it & nothing can be lost.

I am well satisfied that republican slate will prevail, but consider its preponderance by no means as completely established yet. What subject may be furnished by the assailing party (for the monarchic has been so heretofore) remains for the next session to shew. If it appears that ground has been gained in the H. of R., it must be considered as a sure indication of the public sentiment. For that sentiment; if republican will be resisted by a strong party in both branches of the legislature as long as it can be with safety to themselves. Altho' in this State the decided vote of the majority woud. be in all cases of the kind, as it shod. be, yet tis most certain that there is a strong party in favor of the opposit interest. Many of those who censure the measures of the present administration, & by that mean have advanced themselves in the publick estimation, are in this class. The publick are not sufficiently informed upon these heads & it will yet take time to make them so.

I have no news to give you from this quarter that can be interesting. The town seems to be agitated by the competition between two gent. Mr. Bracken (the former professor) & Mr. Henderson, for the professorship of humanity, the visitors having established it. The character of the former you know. The latter is a well informed man of good

reputation & who no officiates. The reestablishment of that professorship has brought back to the college a great number of small boys, but in other respects it has experienced no remarkable change. Its funds are respectable & its president a capable & industrious man, yet its services to the community less important than might be expected. May we not hope as the country becomes exonerated from debt, publick & private, some considerable advance may be made for the establishment of such an institution elsewhere? With great erespect & esteem I am dear Sir sincerely your friend & servant

Jas. Monroe

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